

D#23 ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS

SUPPLEMENTAL STAFF REPORT

SUMMARY: This Supplemental Staff Report provides responses to issues that were raised at a Planning Commission meeting regarding amendments to the Renton Municipal Code Development Regulations (Title IV). It also includes additional information that staff has identified as being necessary to include in the analysis for amendments.

General Description

The City of Renton Planning Division made this docket item request. It proposes amending Title IV to allow Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU's) in most residential zones when they are subordinate to and detached from a single family dwelling.

Planning Commission Issue: *Proposed allowance of a range for the rear yard setback for ADU's to be at minimum five feet to a maximum that will be the standard for primary dwellings in the applicable zone. For example, in the R-4 zone the range would be between five feet and twenty five feet. The range would allow the Administrator to determine the appropriate rear yard setback for an ADU during the review process.*

Staff Response: Staff recommends increasing the minimum of the range for the rear yard setback for ADU's to ten feet in the Resource Conservation (RC), Residential One Dwelling Unit per Acre (R-1), and the Residential Four Dwelling Units per Acre (R-4) zones. Increasing the minimum of the range in these zones will still preserve a reasonable amount of flexibility for the rear yard setback. It is also reasonable to increase the minimum standard in these zones where the prevailing condition is large lot residential development. The ten foot minimum will still allow the placement of an ADU to have a reasonable range of placement on the parcel while also leaving opportunity for a degree of variety in building placement. With this proposed change to a ten foot minimum, in the RC zone, there would be twenty five feet of possible placement, in the R-1 there would be fifteen feet, and in the R-4 there would be also be fifteen feet.

In residential zones that are higher density, and therefore smaller lot sizes, increasing the minimum of the range to ten feet would not preserve adequate flexibility. For example, if the minimum range was ten feet in the R-8 zone, there would only be ten feet of possible placement. In the R-8, R-10, and R-14 zones the range should be at minimum five feet to a maximum of the requirement for the primary dwelling. This five foot minimum in the R-8 would allow for fifteen feet of range in which to place the rear yard of the ADU. In both the R-10 and R-14 zones, there would be ten feet of possible placement.

Planning Commission Issue: *Garbage Collection.*

Staff Response: Each ADU will be addressed distinctly from the primary dwelling. Therefore, garbage will be collected separately.

Planning Commission Issue: *Neighborhoods becoming overwhelmed with high volumes of ADU's.*

Staff Response: Placing a limit on the number of ADU's that are permitted each year would help ensure that neighborhoods don't experience rapid growth in the number of ADU's in their area. Staff recommends limiting the number of detached ADU's permitted each year to 50.

In September 2006, the City of Seattle began to allow detached ADU's in the southeastern portion of the city. (The City of Seattle calls detached ADU's "backyard cottages".) According to a City of Seattle memo dated December 15, 2008, a total of 17 backyard cottages were built in that area from September 14, 2006 to July 31, 2008, an average of 9 per year. There are 17,631 lots in the southeastern portion of the city that qualified to construct a backyard cottage, a rate of .00051 cottage per lot. It is estimated that currently the City of Renton has 19,172 single family lots. Assuming Renton has a similar experience to the City of Seattle, Renton could expect 10 detached ADU's per year.

According to the aforementioned City of Seattle memo, the demonstrated building activity in southeastern Seattle was close to other standards of forecasting ADU activity. The memo cites forecasting developed by Patrick Hare, who surveyed the development activity of ADU's in 47 communities in America. Hare found that on average a community can expect one ADU per 1,000 single family homes. This finding is now called Hare's Rule. Hare's Rule considers both attached and detached ADU's. In southeast Seattle, the average number of attached and detached ADU's built per year was 21. Hare's Rule would forecast 18. According to Hare's Rule, the City of Renton could expect the total number of attached and detached ADU's per year to be 19. However, the allowance of attached ADU's is limited in Renton, so it is likely that Renton would experience a number more in line with the 10 forecasted using the .0051 detached ADU's per lot calculation.

Although the staff recommendation of 50 is significantly greater than forecasted numbers, staff feels that it is appropriate for two reasons. First, the City currently has two potential annexations that could add over 40,000 residents to the City, most of those residents live in single-family homes. This would add a proportionate number of potential lots where ADU's could be built. Second, there are two conditions that may create an incentive for homeowners to construct ADU's in numbers greater than past experiences would dictate. Those two conditions are: the current downturn in the market and the aging of the Baby Boomer generation. It is reasonable and advantageous to the City to set the limit at a number that won't have to be amended as the City grows or as conditions change and may increase the desire of homeowners to build ADU's.

Finally, the City of Seattle also found that the backyard cottages that were built in southeast Seattle were not concentrated in one particular neighborhood; they were dispersed throughout the area in which they were allowed. It is reasonable to anticipate that Renton would experience a similar dispersion of the location of ADU's throughout the City. Therefore, it is reasonable to anticipate that no one particular neighborhood would experience a high volume of ADU's.